

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Poland

REPORT

SUBJECT Observations on the Polish Student
Journal Po Prostu

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Enclosure A

NO. OF PAGES: 4

SUBJECT : Observations on the Polish Student
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1. The five day Warsaw demonstrations in early October 1957 were the result of a decision of the Central Committee of the PZPR to ban the progressive student publication Po Prostu. [redacted] this act reflected Gomulka's desire to eliminate what had become a source of irritation to both Soviet and various Polish Communist leaders. [redacted] up to 1955 Po Prostu had been a progressive newspaper which catered primarily to the students attending various universities and higher educational institutions in the Warsaw area. It acquired a definite program only after the March 1955 Party plenum when the PZPR came out against the excesses which brought about the reorganization of the Polish security service in December 1954.
2. From the time of this plenum Po Prostu assumed a "progressive-democratic" stand which reached a peak in the months following the Twentieth Party Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. In an article entitled "What Shall We Do?" (after the title of Lenin's work published two years after the revolution of 1905) the youthful editors during April 1956 strongly endorsed the abolition of the many controls which they felt still hampered the process of "democratization." Its editor Eligjusz Lasota, his deputy Roman Cymand, and an assistant Wladyslaw Godek gained widespread notoriety throughout Poland, and the usual edition of 10,000 copies of Po Prostu soon expanded to a circulation of 150,000. Even this was insufficient, and members of Clubs of Intellectuals (Kluby Inteligencji - KI) which had sprung up throughout Poland read each issue aloud or passed copies from hand to hand at each meeting. Po Prostu devoted a special section of each edition to these KIs. [redacted] these clubs continued to play a very important role in Polish political developments because they constituted the only source of "progressive" thinking both within and outside the PZPR ranks in provincial towns and villages.

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3. During the April-October 1956 period, Po Prostu, in a series of articles entitled the "Kielce Affair", unmasked the activities of a PZPR clique which had ruled the Kielce county and provincial administrations with an "iron hand." The Po Prostu editors actually charged the provincial secretary of Kielce, the chief of the Peoples' Council and the head procurator with having illegally jailed specific "progressive" individuals without cause. As a result of the investigations launched by the PZPR Central Committee from Warsaw, the Po Prostu charges were essentially substantiated, and certain Kielce activists were dismissed from the PZPR in 1957. Such successful campaigns undertaken by this publication inspired the provincial KIs in turn to look into various excesses of PZPR members in their own areas. The Communist activists retaliated against this interference by violently attacking the young intellectuals who were, in many cases, PZPR members. [redacted] although the Po Prostu articles contributed greatly to removing countless excesses by unscrupulous PZPR members holding important jobs, they also undermined the local authority of the Party causing much of the resulting dissatisfaction among the PZPR rank and file. This stemmed from the latter's resentment that they were unable to profit personally from some of the exposed corrupt practices by the Party officials.
4. The role of Po Prostu during the VIII PZPR Plenum in October 1956 was an important one. Its editors worked closely with the former first secretary of the Warsaw provincial Committee, Stefan Staszewski and his deputy Kazimierz Olejniczak. They passed important information to Po Prostu so that student action in support of Gomulka could be undertaken at the proper moment in Warsaw. [redacted] such information was intentionally "leaked" from Politburo sessions directly to these two Gomulka supporters who worked with Lasota, Cymand, and the PZPR secretary of the Zeran Automobile Factory, Gozdzik and his counterpart in the Motorcycle Factory at Minsk Street in Praga district of Warsaw. [redacted] had seen Staszewski in one of the Polytechnic Institute auditorium wings at the large student demonstration which took place on October 20, 1956 when Gozdzik asked the students to support Gomulka. Staszewski sent regular two-hour bulletins to Gomulka by messenger to the Politburo so that Gomulka could use this material as evidence of popular support by the Polish masses. Because of close cooperation with Staszewski, Po Prostu had been able to print many of the details of the closed meetings of the VIII PZPR Plenum between October 19-21, 1956. Since Gomulka must have felt that the youthful elements within Po Prostu would never subject themselves to the strict discipline required from a good party worker, he gradually isolated himself from this group. That Po Prostu did not suffer as a result of this separation is demonstrated by the fact that during the January 1957 elections its editor Lasota was elected to the Polish Sejm.
5. The pressure of various PZPR elements antagonized by the Po Prostu campaigns finally brought about Lasota's resignation from the editorial board of the publication in the spring of 1957. The Central Committee, reflecting Gomulka's views, tried to force the editorial board to assume a less critical and a more pro-government line. This decision to control Po Prostu initiated by the Central Committee was actually implemented by Artur Starewicz as chief of the Committee's Publication Division. The final clash was postponed when the Po Prostu editors refused to accede to these demands and closed the publication offices during the regular two month summer vacation period. The conflict was renewed with the first

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issue of Po Prostu after the opening of the new school year. The Party began its attack through the Administration for the Control of the Press (Urząd Kontroli Prasy - UKP). After Trybuna Ludu, the official PZPR daily, had charged Po Prostu with bringing harm to Poland, the Central Committee was faced with only two alternatives, (1) to permit the newspaper to carry on its "harmful" work or (2) to revoke its permit. It took the latter step.

6. In arriving at a decision regarding Po Prostu, Gomulka had to consider various factors. By revoking the paper's permit, he would show ingratitude to a publication which had actually planned most of the demonstrations supporting his resistance to Soviet interference in October 1956. Its banning could cause student demonstrations which might spread to the dissatisfied workers. The move would also bring about a loss of Gomulka's popularity among the progressive students and many Polish writers and intellectuals. This in turn would be reflected in the substantial loss of his prestige in the West where broad circles had begun to regard Gomulka as a supporter of "democratization" in Poland. Despite all of these factors, Gomulka held to his decision to cancel the paper's permit.
7. [redacted] Gomulka had been motivated in his decision by the following factors:
 - a. During the 1956-57 period, Po Prostu was so well known in Warsaw student circles that it had become a symbol of a "progressive" trend and method of thinking. Furthermore, great numbers of Soviet students tended to agree with Po Prostu. Although it was banned in the USSR, copies had been brought into the USSR by participants in the Moscow Youth Festival and other more recent travellers from Poland. On a number of occasions, [redacted] heard Soviet Ambassador Ponomarenko or other Soviet officials speak of Po Prostu with alarm. They asked Polish activists "How can you permit the publication of this paper?" [redacted] Gomulka yielded to Soviet Party Secretary Khrushchev's personal intervention in banning the publication of Po Prostu.
 - b. During the spring and summer of 1957, the action of Chinese Communist officials reflected a stiffening of the official line towards students. Gomulka might have received criticism of Po Prostu from high-ranking Chinese Communists, which advice coupled with Soviet pressure have encouraged his decision to shut down Po Prostu at this time. [redacted] in China MAO Tse-tung's earlier promise of an extension of freedom was eventually followed by use of force to curb student unrest.
 - c. Khrushchev's antagonism towards the role of the Petofi circles in Budapest, and Kadar's persecution of the press and intellectuals, reflected the application of a firm stand in Hungary. In Czechoslovakia, the press and intellectuals were under such rigid control that they not only refrained from criticism of their own government, but even severely attacked the so-called excesses of the Polish press. The Polish film The Blind Track, which received a Karlsbad Film Festival award in 1956, was subjected to violent subsequent criticism from the ideological standpoint by the Czechs.

- d. In East Germany, the Harrich trial brought out the professor's alleged

- e. The Djilas trials in Yugoslavia reflected the Yugoslav struggle against "progressive thinking."

[redacted] all of the above reflected the overall influence exerted by Khrushchev to curb the new freedom of thought which had begun to spread in Communist literary and intellectual circles. The Gomulka decision to curb Po Prostu was an outward manifestation of this pressure which appeared to have been launched by mutual agreement among the leadership of all key Communist parties, including those of Yugoslavia and Communist China.

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